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# **Grand challenges: companies and universities working for a better society**

**Extended Abstracts**

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**September 7-8, 2020**

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**Grand challenges:  
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for a better society**

**7-8 September 2020**

***Electronic Conference Proceedings***

Extended Abstracts

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*Sandro Castaldo, Elisa Giuliani, Marco Frey e Marta Ugolini*

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Al Lettore,

questo volume accoglie gli extended abstract del Convegno Sinergie-SIMA 2020, dal titolo *Grand challenges: Companies and Universities working for a better society*, Università di Pisa, Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna, Pisa, 7-8 settembre 2020.

Le società contemporanee si trovano di fronte a un bivio: da un lato i governi sono sotto pressione per raggiungere obiettivi ambiziosi di crescita economica, dall'altro tale crescita alimenta complesse sfide ambientali e sociali, parte degli obiettivi di sviluppo sostenibile, o Agenda 2030, delle Nazioni Unite. Ciò spinge verso un ripensamento del capitalismo così come tradizionalmente inteso.

Lo scopo del Convegno è di discutere del ruolo delle imprese e dell'università per affrontare queste sfide. Per quanto riguarda le imprese, un focus particolare è rivolto agli impatti positivi che esse possono esercitare sulla società e sull'ambiente attraverso varie iniziative: dagli investimenti responsabili al coinvolgimento degli stakeholder per affrontare rilevanti problematiche sociali. Altrettanto articolato è il contributo che le università possono offrire attraverso le proprie attività di ricerca, formazione e terza missione.

Gli Extended Abstract raccontati in questo volume affrontano la tematica con una varietà di argomenti, punti di vista, prospettive.

Vengono altresì proposti studi e ricerche sul più ampio e generale capo del management, cui spetta un ruolo da protagonista anche al di fuori delle imprese.

*Sandro Castaldo, Elisa Giuliani, Marco Frey e Marta Ugolini*



Cari Lettori e Convegnisti,

il *call for paper* del Convegno Sinergie-SIMA 2020 Conference dal titolo *Grand challenges: companies and universities working for a better society* ha previsto la possibilità di presentare *extended abstract* oppure *full paper*. In totale sono pervenuti in redazione 113 *extended abstract* e 35 *full paper*.

Per gli *extended abstract*, la valutazione dei contributi ricevuti è stata operata dai Chair e dal coordinamento scientifico in base alla coerenza con il tema del Convegno e/o con gli studi di management secondo l'articolazione dei Gruppi Tematici SIMA. Sono state altresì valutate la chiarezza e la rilevanza (anche potenziale) dei contenuti proposti.

Per i *full paper*, la procedura di valutazione dei contributi è stata condotta secondo il meccanismo della *peer review* da parte di due referee anonimi, docenti universitari ed esperti dell'argomento, scelti all'interno dei soci SIMA e della comunità di Sinergie.

In particolare, nella valutazione dei contributi i referee hanno seguito i seguenti criteri:

- chiarezza degli obiettivi di ricerca,
- correttezza dell'impostazione metodologica,
- coerenza dei contenuti proposti con il tema/track del convegno e/o con gli studi di management,
- contributo di originalità/innovatività,
- rilevanza in relazione al tema/track del convegno e/o agli studi di management,
- chiarezza espositiva,
- significatività della base bibliografica.

L'esito del referaggio ha portato a situazioni di accettazione integrale, accettazione con suggerimenti e non accettazione. In caso di giudizio discordante la decisione è stata affidata ai Chair. Ogni lavoro è stato poi rinviato agli Autori completo delle schede di referaggio per la attuazione delle modifiche suggerite dai referee.

A seguito del processo di valutazione sono stati accettati 23 *full paper* e 111 *extended abstract*, pubblicati in due distinti volumi.

Tutti gli *extended abstract* di questo volume sono stati presentati e discussi durante il Convegno e pubblicati *online* sul portale della rivista Sinergie ([www.sijm.it](http://www.sijm.it)). Quest'anno sono anche disponibili on line i video con le presentazioni registrate dagli Autori.

Nel ringraziare tutti gli Autori per la collaborazione ci auguriamo che questo volume contribuisca a fornire un avanzamento di conoscenze sul ruolo che le imprese e l'università possono svolgere per conciliare la crescita economica e la necessità di affrontare le complesse sfide globali ambientali e sociali.

I Chair e il Coordinamento Scientifico

*Marco Frey, Elisa Giuliani, Marta Ugolini, Sandro Castaldo,  
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# Relational goods between person, acknowledgment and affective commitment: A contribution to the creation of public value

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**Objectives.** *The world must respond quickly to the new emerging emergencies that are permeating our times. Economic, moral, institutional, and affective crises: indeed, in a globalized world the crisis can only be collective, so it is essential to find solutions that go to the deep core. A central role is played by the human groups at the core of our society: family, friends, universities and enterprises. In particular, during this historical moment, organizations must not lose the profound human sense of cohesion, social development and innovation, otherwise the whole society would fall apart. Coherently, enterprises should set apart profit maximization as their exclusive objective and focus also the creation of public value (Smith, 2004).*

*The debate on the meaning and creation of public value is relevant and structured. Creating public value is not only a prerogative of companies who are operating in the public sector, it should be a common objective for all organizations (Moore, 1994). Thus, it is important to verify if actions taken by a company are bringing a clear benefit to society (Alford, 2008). Specifically, these values are held on the relationship between individuals and a social entity (Rutgers, 2015). In practice, evaluating a contribution to the creation of public value means establishing if that contribution has had a substantial impact on one or more needs at individual level (Meynhardt, 2009). Accordingly, whether public value is associated with the creation of individual and social well-being, managers need to combine the social mission pursued by the firm with the individual needs of its employees, recognizing that the public/social is a resource from which value can be drawn (Lott Jr, 1990).*

*Enterprises are in fact networks of social relationships (Grootaert & Van Bastelaer, 2002); therefore, managing these relationships in accordance with a human logic guarantees the creation of well-being for people and a greater grade of efficiency for organizations. Economic science has always studied the importance of social relations; however, the logic behind this phenomenon is always instrumental to the achievement of some finality, excluding the true essence of the phenomenon itself. As an example, relational sociology focused on the conceptualization of the real meaning of a relationship in order to define the so-called relational goods (Donati, 2019). Analyzing a part of literature, we have been able to identify some common elements to the different areas of relational goods thought (Bruni & Stanca, 2008). In trying to unite the concepts of person and acknowledgment and in arguing that relations between human beings should be rethought, we have concluded that only those relations formed by intersubjectivity's and reflexivity's aspects are able to guarantee unplanned and unexpected benefits to the involved subjects. (Donati, 2014). Economic science has always supported the idea that anything that is able to guarantee some form of benefit can be classified as a good. In the case of intersubjective and reflexive social relations, we cannot refer to private or public goods, but to relational goods.*

*Social relations have a triadic structure: they presuppose the participation of two subjects and guarantee the development of advantages. The intersubjectivity refers to the encounter between two people that takes place because a social relationship exists. Reflexivity instead refers to mutual education. Taking care and giving value to a social relationship means understanding the good of that relation and integrating it with one's personal identity. The sociologist Donati identified the importance of intersubjectivity and reflexivity in a relationship (Donati, 2011). However, it is necessary to extend the concept of reflexivity also towards the aggregative aspect. It is not possible assume that all people are able to reach and integrate the good from a relationship, but the benefits will be able to emerge also in reference to a type of aggregative reflexivity (Mulé, 1999). If it is true that social relations conceptualized as the union of intersubjective and reflexive aspects are able to guarantee a benefit and to qualify themselves as relational goods, it will be important to measure and evaluate this benefit. Indeed, it is thanks to these benefits that well-being is developed. The analysis of literature has highlighted a gap in regard to relational goods importance in the managerial and organizational spheres. Existing research undertaken on this phenomenon has in fact primarily focused on the identification of relational goods in contexts such as the family (Terenzi et al., 2016), schools*

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and universities (Colozzi, 2006), or non-profit enterprises (Donati, 2011). Additionally, while several economists have developed conceptual models in attempt to measure the phenomenon, the tools lack empirical validation (Colozzi, 2011). Among these, the most detailed one derives from the research of Donati and Solci (2011), who have conceptualized the relational good through a list of thirty items. This study falls mainly within the sociological field and does not completely satisfy the needs of application in the economic sector. Henceforth, the first aim of this research is to explore whether such instrument deriving from sociology could be useful in economic literature. Additionally, the research will also focus on the exploration of the antecedents and outcomes of relational goods in organizational context. Thus, we have highlighted a substantial gap not only on the measurement of relational goods, but also on the effects that these goods can produce within for-profit organizations.

**Conceptual Framework.** In order to understand if social relations can qualify as an antecedent variable to the creation of public value within for-profit enterprises, we proceeded to develop a conceptual model based on four hypotheses (see figure 1).

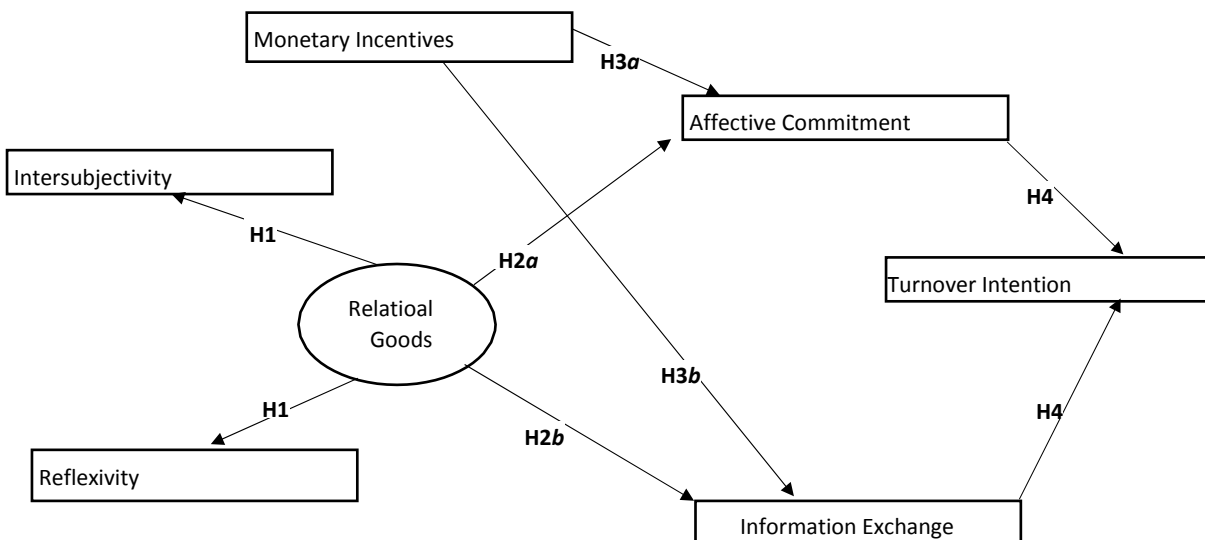
*Hypothesis 1.* First of all, we hypothesize that social relations are formed by two aspects: intersubjectivity and reflexivity. In this sense, the relation will grant a benefice and will qualify as a relational good (Donati, 2019). Thus, we hypothesize that the relational good construct is formed by intersubjectivity and reflexivity. Intersubjectivity implies the meaning of sharing and agreement (Mori et Hayashi, 2006), as mutual awareness, behavioural orientation and encounter (Coelho et Figueiredo, 2003). The purpose of reflexivity is to crack the codes, in order to imagine new possibilities, rediscovering the human creativity (Sandywell, 1996).

*Hypotheses 2a and 2b.* Next, we consider relational goods as an independent variable. We will accordingly evaluate how the relationship is related to the worker's state of mind and to his willingness to collaborate with other employees. We empirically examine if relational goods are significant antecedents of affective commitment and information exchange.

*Hypothesis 3a and 3b.* We consider an additional focus, namely, verify if the Monetary Incentives (Lai, 2009) are able to have a greater influence on the employee's attachment to the enterprise and to share information in the work context. In detail, Monetary Incentives will be placed as an antecedent variable and opposed to relational goods. Consequently, we suppose that monetary incentives are not able to influence the two latent variables (Zamagni, 2008).

*Hypothesis 4.* Finally, we will evaluate if Affective commitment and Information exchange are able to reduce the Turnover Intention. We assume a negative influence on the final dependent variable of our model. Specifically, we will try to estimate if the emphasis that an employee associates to the intersubjective and reflexive relations, can be considered as an antecedent variable of one of organizational commitment's dimensions, i.e. the Affective commitment (Meyer et al., 1993) and the Information Exchange (Youndt et al., 2004). Therefore, we shall test the relation between Relational Goods, Affective commitment, Information exchange on the dependent variable Turnover Intention (Cheng et al., 1998). In the conceptual model, the variable that gives a contribution to the creation of well-being and public value resides in the Affective Commitment. This latent variable refers not only to the attachment and involvement that the employee has towards the organization, it indicates organizational identification. Evidently, if the company manages to increase this aspect, employee's well-being will increase (Zamagni, 2008). The values that make the organization unique and that distinguish it from other competing companies, will become values in which individuals will be able to identify themselves. The responsibility of organizations will be to pursue a consistent social mission with the expectations of their employees.

Fig. 1. Hypothesized conceptual model

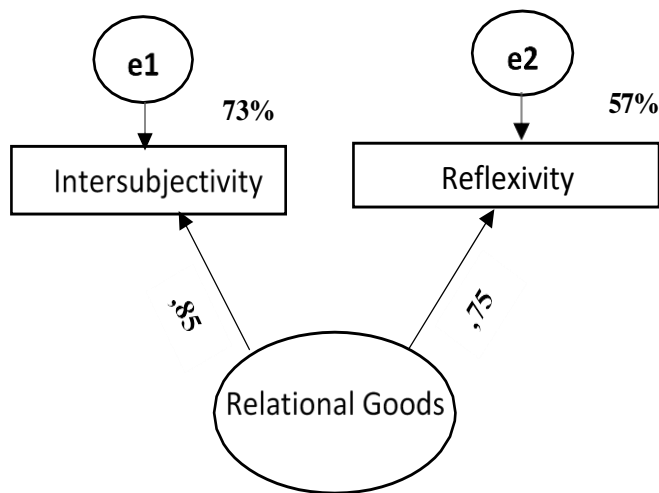


Source: Authors' elaboration

**Methodology.** *In order to assess the validity of the hypotheses, we proceeded to create a questionnaire consisting of thirty items to be validated and fourteen items validated in literature. We received 344 responses Italian employees. The items were measured using Likert's seven-point attitude scale. In particular, to verify if relational goods variable is formed by the intersubjective and reflexive aspect, we empirically tested the relational goods questionnaire by Donati and Solci (Donati et Solci, 2011). It was necessary to conduct an exploratory factorial analysis (EFA) through the use of the statistical software SPSS v.26. This statistical analysis allows to draw some considerations in terms of reliability and variance referring to the items that compose the first level latent variables related to the dimensions of relational goods. The factorial analysis is structured on the assumption that the correlation between variables is determined by non-observable dimensions (factors). Through the main component extraction method, it will be possible to construct the different factors by grouping a set of observed variables correlated to each other. In our research we already know which factors are able to explain the construction of relational goods. The items that investigate social relations have been broken down in the research of Donati and Solci in intersubjectivity and reflexive. We have decided to accept this essential assumption: relational goods derive from the union of two first level latent variables, intersubjective relation and reflexive relation. These will be the two components that we will analyze. Therefore, has been calculated Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin's test (KMO) in order to measure the level of sample adequacy, necessary for the factorial analysis. This procedure has been applied to both components. The factors adequacy is above acceptable range (0.795- 0.786). The proportion of variance of each variable, -communality- and the total variance explained was then calculated. Finally, we analyze the factors loading. These are correlation coefficients that permit to show how much the items are associated with the factor under consideration. Then, for all the latent variables of our model, we elaborated the reliability statistics in order to evaluate the adequacy of associated items. Adequacy is evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. This coefficient makes it possible to measure the availability of the items and measure their internal consistency. This measurement verifies the effectiveness of the scales examined. Values below the critical limit (0.60) must necessarily be discarded. We initially evaluated the availability of the variables already validated in literature. Finally, we evaluated the reliability of the scales -inter-subjectivity and reflexivity- created by factorial exploratory analysis. The scale -Monetary Incentives- composed by three items presents a highly reliable Cronbach's Alpha (0.857); for the Affective Commitment variable the Cronbach's Alpha is very high and is just above 0.9 (0.905); Information exchange's items results very good: the scale composed by 4 items is very reliable (0.854); Turnover Intention is the dependent variable of our conceptual model, composed by 3 items. Cronbach's Alpha is at high values (0.831), a good value that confirms the credibility of the scale. We then analyzed the statistics of the two factors that form the second-degree latent variable Relational goods. The first factor examined is Intersubjectivity. Cronbach's Alpha is close to (0.80). This result is acceptable and largely exceeds the minimum threshold established by literature. The second factor is Reflexivity. The reliability is very similar to the factor analyzed above. The value result less good compared to the variables presented in the first part. Nevertheless, these results are well above the threshold defined in literature, which testifies a good internal coherence between the items used for the variables. Once analyzed the different inter-item correlations that judge or prejudice the reliability of the single latent variables under study, it is useful to observe what degree of correlation there is between them. Through Pearson's correlation index we have analyzed the systemic relationship between the model variables. Inter- subjectivity and Reflexivity are the most positively correlated variables. This result is indispensable because, as widely discussed in the previous pages, it would be just the union of the two relations to give origin to the construct of relational goods (0.655). In this sense, it is possible to explain the notion of social relation, moving away from the economic conceptualizations of relation and clinging to the sociological sphere. All the variables present results that are consistent with our hypotheses. An important consideration, however, concerns the Monetary Incentives. Monetary incentives have no significant correlation with the model variables. They are positively correlated to the Turnover Intention, even if with very low values. This would show that Monetary incentives would increase the willingness of the employee to leave work. In order to confirm or not confirm our assumptions we used the structural equation model (SEM). The SEM model is a multivariate statistical analysis method that allows us to model and analyze the relationships of randomness present among the latent variables, starting from a set of observed variables. This tool allows to verify if a variable is able to influence another variable and clarifies the explained variance. Through the calculation of the standardized regression weights, we have highlighted the weights that translate into influences. The possibility of hypothesizing and calculating simultaneously multiple statistical influences related to the antecedent variables has made the SEM methodology one of the most used techniques in the social sciences.*

**Results.** *Hypothesis 1 has been confirmed, thus providing validation for the relational goods scale. Moreover, in agreement with Donati and Solci (2011), we have shown that the second level latent variable is composed of two types of relationships: intersubjective and reflexive. It would not be possible to discuss Relational Good by mentioning only intersubjectivity or reflexivity aspect. Therefore, as a consequence of the EFA analysis, of Cronbach's Alpha analysis and confirmatory analysis, we have statistically validated the scale that foresees relational goods as second level latent variable composed by two factors: intersubjective and reflexive.*

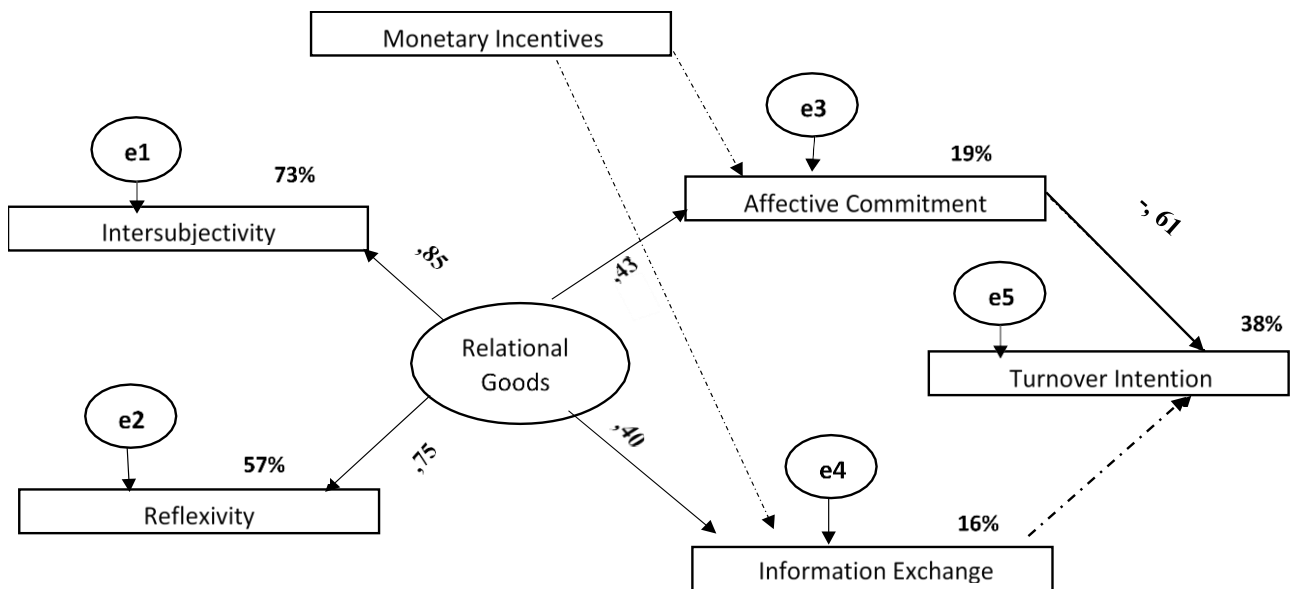
Fig. 2. Results of our preliminar analysis



Source: Authors' elaboration

In respect of other propositions, they have been confirmed or partially confirmed. The structural model allowed us to confirm the second and third hypothesis. The fourth hypothesis is partially demonstrated. The graph shows how the Relational Goods positively influence Affective Commitment and Information exchange, qualifying itself as an antecedent variable. This result confirms that social relations, characterized by intersubjectivity and reflexivity, will ensure a benefit, i.e. a greater development of organizational identification by the employee and a greater propensity to exchange information with other colleagues, thus reducing information asymmetries. Monetary Incentives do not present a significant influence with either of the two latent variables of the hypothesized model. This result is consistent with the results shown through the Pearson matrix. Moreover, the fourth hypothesis is partially demonstrated: only Affective Commitment can reduce Turnover Intention. The Information exchange does not exert any influence on the dependent variable, even if these are significantly correlated (see figure 3).

Fig. 3. Results of the statistical analysis

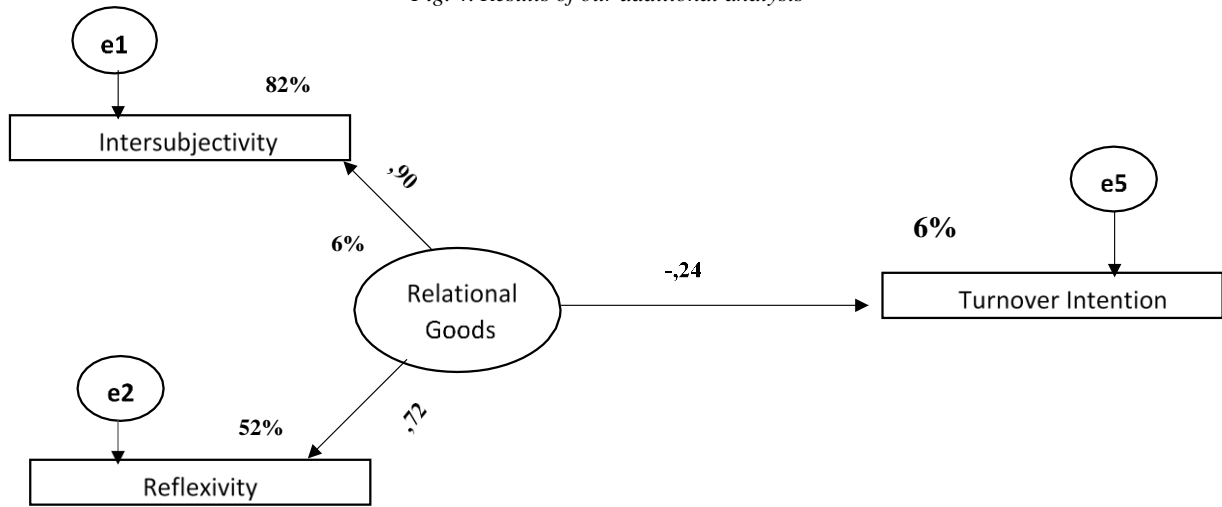


Source: Authors' elaboration

**Additional findings.** Finally, we decided to further deepen our analysis, with the aim of verifying if there was a mediation variable included in the model. The mediation variable permit to associate an independent variable to a dependent variable. The first step is to certify the existance of a significant relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. The second level construct -Relational good-s is able to influence the variable Turnover Intention (-0.24) presenting a p-value close to 0.001. According to these results, social relations are presented as antecedents able to explain not only Affective Commitment and Information exchange, further a relation's benefice is to reduce the Turnover Intention. Following this line of reasoning, it is correct to state that Donati's and the relational sociology's interpretation on considering social relations as antecedents able to condition and explain a

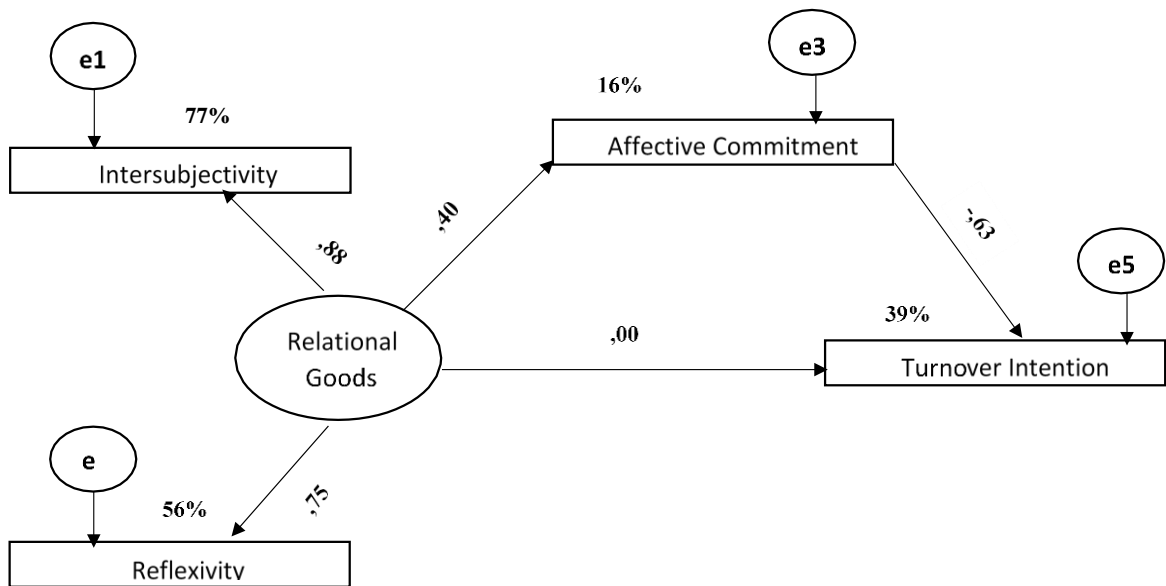
totality of phenomena, even corporate ones, could be appropriate. However, thanks to the addition the variable Affective commitment, we observe how the relationship between Relational Goods - Turnover Intention decreases, bringing the second level construct to have no influence on the dependent variable. This result shows that the Affective commitment has completely absorbed the effect of the Relational Goods on the Turnover Intention (see figure 4 and figure 5).

Fig. 4. Results of our additional analysis



Source: Authors' elaboration

Fig. 5. Alternative model



Source: Authors' elaboration

**Practical implications.** Economic, family, institutional and relational crises that have affected every area of society can be overcome through solutions that aim at an internal and not an external understanding of events (Benabou & Tirole, 2006). Bringing back to the debates intrinsic motivations to economic studies is essential to overcome a multitude of critical issues. Making people protagonists means giving importance to human and social relationships as the only answer to escape from any form of crisis and create public value, conceived as individual and social well-being. Enterprise should be studied as an entity endowed with individuality, and specifically with respect to the individual people who make it up. It will be important to analyze human relationships that form the enterprise and it will be necessary to emphasize organization's identity. We have found in the sociological approach an answer to represent human relations excluding the instrumental aspect.

In recent years, many sociologists and economists have deepened the theme of relational goods. Thank to the validation of the relational goods scale, we have been able to demonstrate how social relations are a precursor of the Turnover Intention and are able to influence Affective Commitment and Information exchange. A further achievement

was to demonstrate that monetary incentives have no significant influence in keeping a person in their current job. Another relevant is related to reached discovery was to give the importance relevance of to the identity aspect. If it is true that social relationships contribute to the development of the Affective commitment, it is even more correct to say that it is precisely may be this variable that plays the role of perfect mediator and influences the employee willingness to remain in the organization (Mowday et al., 1979). These reflections allow us to confirm the line of thought pursued so far: the human being that are a part of a company, and the related social relations represent the starting point the creation of a fertile ground on which to work. However, the social relationship is not enough to govern and direct an enterprise. It is the personal identity of the company that represents the model's main leverage. Each person needs to identify in something and if it is possible to do it with the organization, this person will inevitably mature the Intention to stay. Finally, we have shown that contamination is a richness not only for people, but also for the disciplines of study.

The economy must embrace sociology in order to understand pure human relationships and overcome instrumental logic. At the same time, sociology must be open to economics if it wants to understand the organization's dynamics reasons. Relational goods refer to a person's relational attitude (Stebbins, 1970). Evidently, the entrepreneur cannot exercise control over the employee's willingness to accept a greater intersubjectivity or a broader reflexivity. However, we have shown that social relations represent an important possibility. The entrepreneur should exceed the idea of organization as an environment developed on the logic of power and hierarchies and should create an organizational model based on a community of people who together carry out targeted activities. Donati suggests that "in the society of the future, work will have to be radically changed becoming a relationship between nodes in complex plots that are constantly changing" (Donati, 2017). Demonstrating that social relationships represent the starting point within any organization, we suggest managers to abandon the logic of performance work. In order to give importance to the creativity of each worker, the performance aspect could be combined with activities that emphasize the creative aspect. It is necessary for managers to leave the vision of work as economic objectives but "to value it as a manifestation of a person's being and end". The enterprise should increase and mark its personal identity, in line with the ideas to distinguish itself. In our research we have demonstrate that human relations are a stratagem on which to focus attention, as they directly influence the formation of the Affective commitment. Identity allows the company to be identified and recognized in the context in which it operates and outline the absolutes that diversify it and make it unique. Each of these components contributes to the creation of economic and public value. The relational and identity aspects have succeeded in highlighting the low importance of monetary incentives. Undoubtedly, the crisis we are experiencing brings to light new challenges to which companies should respond considering a new way to increase relationality in smart working conditions. The loss of relationality that characterizes this period could cause negative effects on the development of the Affective Commitment, on the development of entrepreneurship and innovation. Moreover, the loss of relationality could cause a greater increase in the evolution of dynamics such as Burnout. All these possibilities reduce the creation of public value and well-being. Successfully overcoming this critical phase with appropriate strategies is indispensable for enterprises. In this way they would be ready to face future challenges. Research should advance along this line of study.

**Key words:** Relational goods; Intersubjectivity; Reflexivity; Affective Commitment; Public value; Turnover Intention

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